

Budget Unit Brief

FY 2017



Budget Unit: 511 Travel Information System

Purpose and History

The [Iowa 511 Travel Information System](#) provides an easy-to-remember number for travelers to receive weather-related road conditions, traffic incidents, and highway construction information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission designated “511” as the single travel information telephone number to be made available to states and local jurisdictions. A consortium of states pooled costs to develop their specific 511 systems; these include Iowa, Alaska, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Vermont. The Federal Highway Administration provided initial funding of \$700,000 to the consortium of states to develop and design the System, and the states provided 20.0% in matching funds. The Iowa 511 System includes interstates, U.S. routes, and portions of some state highways. The System currently does not include county roads or city streets.

State Funding for the 511 Travel Information System

Funding for the maintenance of the computers and communication equipment for the 511 System comes from the Road Use Tax Fund. The appropriation is included in the Transportation Appropriations Bill under the purview of the Transportation, Infrastructure, and Capitals Appropriations Subcommittee of the General Assembly. The appropriation is transferred from the Department of Transportation to the Iowa State Patrol in the Department of Public Safety for that purpose. Most of the funding is used to maintain the equipment. The Iowa State Patrol, however, does use a portion of the 511 System appropriation for promotional items so travelers are aware of the 511 System. These items are distributed through the Iowa State Patrol Safety Education Programs in schools and communities.

511 System Facts

- 511 is a public service. There is no charge to Iowa wireline users. Wireless users pay normal airtime and roaming charges, according to their wireless service contracts. Pay phone users are responsible for the local call fee.
- The System identifies the caller's telephone prefix when calling from a wireline phone. The System identifies the communications tower that a call from a wireless phone is connected to at the time call is placed. This allows the 511 System to provide information specific to the area of the state where the call originates first.
- System updates occur on an ongoing basis, as conditions change.

Related Budget Units

The Department of Transportation provides year-round updates on road closures and road construction for the System. Iowa State Patrol Officers provide updates on road conditions during periods of inclement weather and Communication Specialists in the Iowa State Patrol enter the information in the 511 System. The responsibilities related to the 511 System are part of several other duties that the officers and communication staffers have. Funding for the operations of the Iowa State Patrol is from the State General Fund.

Revised September 7, 2016

More Information

511 System – Navigation Tips: <http://www.iowadot.gov/511/index.html>
Road Condition Terms: http://www.iowadot.gov/511/road_condition_terms.html

Iowa General Assembly: <http://www.legis.iowa.gov/index.aspx>
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